

HOW TO... Protect your data

Back up and restore all the data and settings on your computer with the help of Acronis True Image 8 and Karl Wright's expert advice

ACRONIS TRUE IMAGE 8 PERSONAL EDITION



If you don't make regular backups of your data, the chances are that one day you will lose it. Your PC will crash, your hard disk will give up the ghost and important files will be lost, possibly forever. Perhaps worse still, your installation of Windows could be corrupted and, unless you have the original disc and know how to reinstall it, you'll be left with a PC that doesn't work.

Happily, you can protect yourself. A disk-imaging program can back up and restore not only specific files and folders but also your entire Windows installation. If something happens to Windows then all you need to do is use the program's bootable rescue disc to copy your backup image of Windows to your hard disk. Alternatively, you can choose to restore individual files and folders rather than your entire hard disk.

One of the best disk-imaging and backup programs on the market is Acronis True Image. You'll find a free copy of Acronis True Image 8 Personal Edition in the Bonus Full Products section of this month's cover DVD. Here we show you how to make a backup image.

1 Before you make your first backup image, you need to decide where you want to save it. The best option is a hard disk that's not permanently attached to your PC, such as a USB hard disk. Failing this, a hard disk inside your PC other than the one on which Windows is installed is a good choice.

If you don't have either of these, you should use True Image to create an Acronis Secure Zone on your system disk. This is a hidden partition

that won't be corrupted or deleted if something happens to the rest of your system.

2 From the main screen, click on Create Image and run the disk-imaging wizard. In the first screen that appears, put a tick next to the disk you want to back up and click Next. In the following screen, choose the folder in which you want to save the image and click Next again. Leave Archive Splitting on Automatic and click through to the next screen to decide how much you want to compress your disk image. The higher the compression, the less space your image will take up, but the slower backup and restore operations will be.

Click through the rest of the wizard without changing anything.

3 Once you have created your image, you can mount it. This means you make it appear in My Computer as if it were a real hard disk in your PC. You will then be able to browse your disk image just as you would any other storage device.

Click on Explore Image from True Image's main screen. Browse to your image file, select it and choose the drive letter you want it to appear under. Click through the rest of the wizard and True Image will mount your image for you. When you've finished using your disk image, click on Unplug Image in the main screen to make the image disappear from My Computer.

4 Mounting an image will work only if your PC will boot. If it won't boot, you'll need a recovery disc to help you restore it. To create a

recovery disc, put a writable CD into your disc drive. Open True Image and, in the panel on the left-hand side, click Create Bootable Rescue Media. Run the wizard, selecting the drive with the CD in it as the one from which to create your disc. If you don't have a CD writer you can use a floppy drive, but you'll need six floppies just to get your PC started so this is best avoided if possible.

5 With the recovery disc in your CD drive, start your PC. You may have to use your PC's BIOS to tell the PC to boot from the CD drive. You can usually do this by pressing the Delete key during system startup. This will take you into the BIOS, your PC's most basic hardware configuration tool. Use the arrow keys on your keyboard to navigate to a category of settings called Standard Configuration Options, or something similar. Under the Boot menu, move the CD drive to the top of the boot order.

Save the changes you've made and exit the BIOS. Your PC will restart and boot from your rescue disc.

6 Your PC will boot into a version of Acronis True Image 8 Personal Edition that looks almost exactly like the one installed on your PC. Click on Restore Image to open the restore wizard. Browse to the disc on which the image is stored, select it and click through, choosing the partition you want to restore the image to, until the wizard starts to run. Restoring a large partition can take some time. Remember, you will lose any data on the hard disk you are writing to once the restore is finished. **CS**

